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Mindfulness and job performance: The mediating role of self-esteem

Bilinçli farkındalık ve iş performansı: Benlik saygısının aracı rolü

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ABSTRACT

Mindfulness is being aware of the moment in a nonjudgmental, accepting, and gentle way. Self-esteem is one's belief in his/her own value. Job performance refers to the effort of an employee in his/her job. The purpose of this study is to observe the role of mindfulness on the job performance levels of employees through their self-esteem. The survey method was applied to collecting data from 394 academicians working at 4 universities in Turkey. Regression analysis was conducted to measure the direct impacts of the proposed relationships. Within the model, Sobel test and bootstrapping method were utilized for measuring the indirect impacts. Findings reveal that mindfulness enhances self-esteem which is positively related to job performance. Further, the study results indicate that self-esteem acts as a mediating variable in the mindfulness–job performance relationship. This research is one of the scarce efforts to evaluate the linkage of mindfulness and job performance via self-esteem. The results underpin the positive orientation theory, self-consistency theory, and learned helplessness theory. According to the positive orientation theory, when employees have a positive orientation, this leads to positive and constructive experiences. Based on the self-consistency theory, employees with high self-esteem can be more fulfilling and productive in their work. Finally, according to the learned helplessness theory, employees with positive self-evaluations are less likely to show motivational deficits such as withdrawing from task-oriented behaviors and reducing work effort, which may cause high job performance.

Keywords: Job performance, mindfulness, self-esteem

ÖZ

Bilinçli farkındalık, yargısız, kabullenici ve nazik bir şekilde kişinin içinde yaşadığı anın farkında olmasıdır. Benlik saygısı kişinin kendi değerine olan inancıdır. İş performansı ise çalışanın işinde gösterdiği çabayı ifade etmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, çalışanların farkındalığının iş performansları üzerindeki rolünü benlik saygısı aracılığıyla araştırmaktır. Bu amaçla, Türkiye'deki dört üniversitede görev yapan 394 akademisyenden veri toplamak için anket metodolojisi kullanılmıştır. Hipotezlerde sunulan ilişkilerin doğrudan etkilerini ölçmek için regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Önerilen modeldeki dolaylı etkileri ölçebilmek için Sobel testi ve bootstrapping yöntemi uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, iş performansı ile olumlu yönde ilişkili olan farkındalığın benlik saygısını güçlendirdiği yönündedir. Ayrıca, ampirik sonuçlar, benlik saygısının farkındalık ile iş performansı ilişkisi üzerindeki aracı rolünü ortaya koyarak, önerilen modeli destekler niteliktedir. Bu çalışma, farkındalık ve iş performansı arasındaki ilişkiyi benlik saygısı merceğinden anlamaya yönelik ender girişimlerden biridir. Sonuçlar pozitif yönelim teorisini, öz tutarlılık teorisini ve öğrenilmiş çaresizlik teorisini desteklemektedir. Pozitif yönelim teorisine göre, çalışanlar olumlu bir yönelime sahip oldukları zaman, bu durum olumlu ve yapıcı deneyimlere sebep olmaktadır Öz tutarlılık teorisinden yola çıkarak yüksek öz saygıya sahip çalışanlar işlerinde daha tatmin edici ve üretken olabilirler. Son olarak öğrenilmiş çaresizlik teorisine göre, olumlu öz değerlendirmeleri olan çalışanların görev odaklı davranışlardan çekilme ve çalışma çabalarını azaltma gibi motivasyonel eksiklikler gösterme olasılıkları daha düşüktür. Böylelikle bu tarz çalışanların iş performansları daha yüksek olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İş performansı, farkındalık, benlik saygısı

Introduction

Mindfulness has been described as giving attention to the existing moment and feeling awareness of the present reality of one's self (King & Haar, 2017). It allows people to perceive their thoughts and events without judging critically (Brown et al., 2007). Mindfulness refers to a psychological condition, which makes objectively observation possible without elaborations, evaluations, and judgments (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Despite its origin in Eastern countries such as India, Western scholars have also recently given immense attention to mindfulness practices because of its positive and beneficial consequences like increased well-being and health (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Hence, mindfulness is gaining interest in different arenas such as neuroscience, health, and social psychology. Both clinical and social psychology research findings have proven that mindfulness has positive relationships with mental and physical health (Dekeyser et al., 2008), and it can be easily trainable (Giluk, 2009). Mindfulness is also an emerging topic in work settings because of its positive results such as reduced stress and anxiety (Soysa & Wilcomb, 2015), greater emotional intelligence levels (Bao et al., 2015), lower job turnover intentions, and higher job satisfaction levels (Andrews et al., 2014). Therefore, organizations began giving importance to mindfulness practices for helping their employees deal with stress, decrease anxiety, and experience higher levels of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (Bajaj et al., 2016b; Good et al., 2016).

Job performance is quite important for the management and development of organizations, and it is crucial for organizational effectiveness (Platis et al., 2015). The effect of mindfulness on employees' job performance levels has not been researched a lot although there exists a huge interest in employees' mindfulness (Reb et al., 2017). Mindful employees tend to be more productive at their work. Research suggests that mindfulness increases one's attention to the current moment (Şahin, 2019; Semple, 2010). When you leave living as an autopilot (not being aware of the things that you are doing and performing every function in an automatic way), your attention increases by focusing on what you are experiencing at the moment and you become aware of what you are really living. While performing their responsibilities and job tasks, employees with high mindfulness intentionally have full attention to the present moment (Dane & Brummel, 2014). However, research examining the underpinning means for the mindfulness–job performance linkage is rare.

Recently, researchers have suggested that self-esteem is another positive outcome that mindfulness affects (Randali et al., 2015). Self-esteem denotes one's overall feelings of worth (Rosenberg, 1965). Mindfulness facilitates giving notice of the current happenings and experiencing less negative views, and enhances individuals' self-esteem (Bajaj et al., 2016b), which is an important factor for predicting employees' job performance. Research has provided evidence of the positive influence of self-esteem on employees' job performance levels (Whelpley & McDaniel, 2016). Positive psychological traits such as self-esteem are recommended as noteworthy forecasters for employees' job performance levels (Judge & Bono, 2001). Hence, the purpose of the current research is to investigate mindfulness–job performance linkage and, with the guidance of the theoretical underpinning of positive orientation theory (Caprara et al., 2009), to investigate whether self-esteem is a mediating variable in the proposed relationship. The proposed model identifies that high mindful employees will ultimately display increased job performance with the help of experiencing greater self-esteem.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Mindfulness–Job Performance Relationship

Mindfulness signifies a nonreactive and nonjudgmental awareness state for the current experiences that are liberated from cognitive and emotional abstractions, including external stimuli such as smells, sights, and sounds (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Buddhism, within the years of 500 BCE, is believed to be the origin of mindfulness even if its basis is found in the context of Upanishads, which are the oldest scriptures of India probably around 700 BCE (Cousins, 1996). From the utterance of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: "Everything will desert you and run away from you if you consider anything as outside you." According to Patanjali, who is believed to be a very ancient thinker using Sanskrit words, individuals need to remove the fluctuations of the mind. As the mind fluctuates, mindfulness decrease and people become distracted, thus they cannot concentrate on what they are doing.

Mindfulness has been regarded in Western academic studies mainly by the research of Kabat-Zinn (1982) about mindfulness-based stress reduction programs. According to the author, mindfulness ascends by purposely giving notice to the current moment and experiencing nonjudgmentally awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Bishop et al. (2004) suggest that people practicing mindfulness are described as realizing how to establish a special connection with their subjectivity, as well as maintaining a state of "standing back." Furthermore, Shapiro et al. (2006) theorize the "standing back" state as "re-perceiving," also labeled as "decentering." Later, Fresco et al. (2007) identified this "decentering" as the capability of perceiving one's views, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs as temporary states in mind. Apart from its state-similar features, considerable evidence provides support to the concept that individuals also display dissimilarities in how frequently they experience the state of mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In this respect, just as people have different personality traits, mindfulness is interpreted as a state of being that varies from person to person. Regulations of attention, awareness, having a present focus, and acceptance of experiences in a nonjudgmental way are the basic mindfulness constituents (Feldman et al., 2007). Employees' cognitive and affective mindfulness also affects their job performance levels (Monteiro & Padhy, 2020).

Employees' performance clearly matters a remarkable deal for organizations. Improving job performance is an essential issue for organizational effectiveness, and mindfulness positively influences employees' job performance levels (Dane & Brummel, 2014; Shao & Skarlicki, 2009). Giving more attention to the job, considering details, detecting possible problems, being able to think clearly, emotional stability, awareness of different perspectives, and problem-solving skills are the factors that enhance employees' job performance levels (Good et al., 2016; Reb et al., 2017; Schmertz et al., 2009). Higher levels of mindfulness help focus more easily on the job and perform effective tasks. Employees high in mindfulness can consider the environmental details and keep their attention more, which may lead to rapid detection of possible problems (Good et al., 2016). Therefore, such employees are more likely to make fewer mistakes and call forth less risky situations caused by carelessness (Schmertz et al., 2009). Through mindfulness, paying more attention and being in a stable condition may also help to deal with disturbing thoughts that can be a sign of absent-minded behaviors, which may cause lower

levels of job performance (Reb et al., 2017). In line with the attention control theory (Baer, 2003), mindfulness practices may facilitate an individual's capability to detect unexpected changes and foster one's sustained attention. Additionally, mindfulness may enhance one's ability for attention switching such that a person may be capable of shifting his/her focus between multiple stimuli without a glitch (Bishop et al., 2004).

Furthermore, mindfulness improves employees' decision-making such that it makes it easy for individuals to engage in a more careful and thoughtful decision process. Mindfulness helps to suppress impulsivity that causes one to consider the situation before giving a response. Besides, mindfulness makes it easier to be aware of multiple views, approaches, and their processing speed which results in notable skills in the problem-solving process (Glomb et al., 2011).

Stress is another factor that reduces employees' job performance levels (Akgunduz, 2015). Mindfulness helps to be more adaptive to emotional reactions to stressful situations. Being at the present/current moment with a nonjudgmental mode can effectively resist the impacts of stressful events (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). High mindful employees may observe stressful occasions in a more clear and easy-going manner with the help of decentering process. Thus, mindfulness is related to reduced reactivity to stressful and hectic circumstances (Arch & Craske, 2010). Consequently, it can be concluded that mindfulness contributes to employees' job performance levels by leading to cognitive flexibility, decision-making accuracy, solving problems related to comprehension, drawing attention, and reducing stress (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Kiken & Shook, 2011; Moore & Malinowski, 2009; Ostafin & Kassman, 2012). Due to the positive impact of mindfulness on job performance, it is predicted that:

> *Hypothesis 1. Mindfulness is positively related to the employees' job performance levels.*

Mindfulness–Self-Esteem Relationship

Self-esteem denotes an evaluative and affective constituent of an individual's self-perception. It expresses how you feel and think about yourself (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Higher self-esteem can be a sign of success in health, life satisfaction, and relationships in one's social life (Orth & Robins, 2014). It is associated with beneficial psychological consequences like adjustment psychologically and feeling positive emotions (Leary & MacDonald, 2003). Mindfulness has been suggested as one of the most worthy factors contributing to diverse issues that are associated with well-being psychologically including self-esteem (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Theoretical research on mindfulness describes mindfulness as a way to improve life quality, decrease suffering, and become more positive (Gampopa, 2000; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Research has suggested that mindfulness enhances individuals' psychological well-being by decreasing one's tendencies toward dependence on external and internal phenomena, thus fostering the regulation of emotions (Kumar, 2002). Theoretical studies also draw attention to the attentional, cognitive, and behavioral benefits of mindfulness (Feldman et al., 2007). Research has provided evidence about the positive impact of mindfulness on employees' self-esteem (Bajaj et al., 2016b) suggesting that living within the present moment and feeling awareness about the current existing reality have a positive influence on one's general sense of worth. Higher mindfulness helps a person less engrossed by pessimistic thoughts and negative feelings that may result in lower self-esteem (Pepping et al., 2013). Being at the moment,

thus, high awareness through mindfulness may help individuals give more notice to their current experiences, causing them less likely to undergo gloomy and distrustful thoughts, and further enhancing the self-esteem of individuals (Michalak et al., 2011). Emotional interaction and anger management are the factors that contribute to one's self-esteem (Akgunduz, 2015), and mindfulness is one of the ways to have emotional stability and deal with stressful conditions (Jankowski & Bąk, 2019). In addition, mindfulness shows individuals that feelings and thoughts sometimes do not reflect reality but instead occur in one's mind. As a result of such kind of discernment, one's tendency to experience destructive emotions and feelings associated with low self-esteem is also reduced (Bajaj et al., 2016a). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

> *Hypothesis 2. Mindfulness is positively related to the employees' self-esteem.*

Self-Esteem–Job Performance Relationship

Accumulating evidence confirms the direct correlation among self-esteem and job performance levels (Chang et al., 2012; Ferris et al., 2010). Self-esteem, which is deliberated as the most essential indicator of core self-evaluations, signifies the overall worth and value that one perceives about himself/herself (Judge et al., 1997). An employee high in self-esteem perceives a challenging job as a deserved chance and opportunity that he/she can manage and get benefit from. Nonetheless, an employee having low self-esteem is more likely to perceive such a job as a possibility to fail (Locke et al., 1996).

Learned helplessness theory (Peterson & Seligman, 1984) supports the linkage of positive self-evaluations and job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). In line with this theory, employees, who have positive core self-evaluations such as self-esteem, are less likely to show motivational deficits like withdrawing from task-oriented behaviors and lowering their job efforts. Thus, such employees may engage in higher job performance. Conversely, employees having negative self-evaluations are more likely to demonstrate helplessness symptoms and may display less job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001).

Moreover, employees, who have high self-esteem, are said to have optimism when they face a failure, and such a situation may help them experience success in the future (Dodgson & Wood, 1998). On the contrary, employees with low self-esteem are more likely to feel that they are useless, not equal to others and they lack respectable qualities or much to be proud of. The ability to prove oneself and efficient competency skills are essential for self-esteem (Akgunduz, 2015). Employees with high self-esteem perform better at their jobs with the help of their belief in themselves, their skills, and their qualities (Ferris et al., 2015).

Self-consistency theory also provides the theoretical frame for the self-esteem–job performance relationship (Korman, 1970) such that individuals with high self-esteem will be more satisfied and productive at work. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

> *Hypothesis 3. Self-esteem is positively related to the employees´ job performance levels.*

The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem

Research indicates that the positive influence of mindfulness on job performance might not always be a straightforward and direct relationship (King & Haar, 2017; Reb et al., 2015). There might be potential mediators for the mindfulness–job performance linkage. In the present study, the impact of mindfulness

on the employees' job performance levels is examined with an emphasis on employees' self-esteem. Positive orientation theory is proposed as the underlying theoretical frame for the hypothesized relationships (Caprara et al., 2009). This theory signifies that displaying and experiencing a positive attitude while viewing oneself, life, and the future help to stand stronger against life although there might be some failures and losses. An individual's positive orientation, which involves one's self-esteem, is regarded as viewing the world and reality from a positive perspective (Caprara et al., 2011). Research (Alessandri et al., 2015; Caprara et al., 2009) has provided evidence that positive orientation predicts employees' job performance levels. In line with this theory, positive orientation (e.g., self-esteem via mindfulness) is anticipated to operate as a psychological source, which may enhance one's capability while engaging and persisting in the allocated job tasks (e.g. job performance).

Based on the literature, it is proposed that employees' self-esteem will work as a mediating variable in the mindfulness–job performance relationship. As discussed earlier, mindfulness is positively related to the employees' job performance levels (*Hypothesis 1*). Additionally, it has been hypothesized that mindfulness is positively correlated with self-esteem (*Hypothesis 2*), and then self-esteem may result in higher job performance levels (*Hypothesis 3*). Thus:

> *Hypothesis 4. Self-esteem mediates the relationship between employees' mindfulness and job performance levels.*

The research model for the mediating impact of self-esteem on the mindfulness–job performance linkage is presented in Figure 1.

Methods

Sample and Procedure

The study participants were 394 academicians who work in 4 universities in Turkey. Due to the positive effect of mindfulness on education (Hanh & Weare, 2017; Tobin, 2018), specifically, academics were chosen as the participants in the study. Evaluation of mindfulness in academics is important in terms of the effects of academicians on students and their role in knowledge transfer. For the data collection, surveys including both demographic and scale questions were used. In the universities, during work time, surveys were managed and collected onsite. Questionnaires were given to the participants based on the convenience method, denoting that only academicians, who were in their workplaces answered the survey questions. The reason for using the convenience method is that it provides the opportunity to reach the participants with easy access, and it is a method that is often used in quantitative research. A consent form explaining

Figure 1.
Mindfulness–Job Performance Relationship: The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem

the research and assuring the confidentiality and the anonymity of the study was given to the participants. The research universe consisting of 750 employees in total can be represented by a sample group consisting of at least 351 employees at the α =.05 confidence level and ±0.05 error level (Altunışık et al., 2004). In this study, a total of 394 surveys were answered out of 600 questionnaires (65.6% response rate). In the study, there were 171 male (43.5%) and 223 female (56.5%) participants having 36.7 average age and 9.8 years of organizational tenure.

Study Measures

The self-stated survey for the academicians comprised of the following scales. Demographic information was collected on age, gender, university, and job tenure.

Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised. Feldman et al.'s mindfulness scale (2007) was used while measuring the participants' mindfulness levels (α=0.77). The scale consists of 12 items and it is a single factor assessment for the mindfulness skills in which respondents answer how frequently they experience the issues in each statement. A sample item is "I can usually describe how I feel at the moment in considerable detail." The Turkish version of the scale was taken from Catak (2012). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized while assessing the model fit indices. The fit for the measurement-model, [χ^2 (157, n = 394), 310.86, p < .01, GFI (goodness-of-fit index)=0.951, CFI (comparative fit index)=0.967, TLI (Tucker Lewis index)=0.949, and RMSEA (root mean square error approximation)=0.06], was acceptable. The criteria for having a good fit in the model is as follows: χ^2/df < 3, GFI > 0.90, CFI > 0.90, TLI > 0.90, RMSEA < 0.08 (Hair et al., 2010). The Cronbach's α for the scale was 0.91.

Self-Esteem Scale. Rosenberg's (1965) ten-item one-dimensional assessment of the self-perception scale was used while assessing the self-esteem of the respondents (α=0.88). An example item is "I feel that I have a number of good qualities. Cuhadaroglu (1986) had executed the Turkish adjustment of the scale. The fit for the measurement model [χ^2 (149, n=394), 291.87, p <.01, GFI=0.964, CFI=0.971, TLI=0.958, and RMSEA=0.05] was acceptable. The reliability for the overall scale was 0.93.

Job Performance. Podsakoff and MacKenzie's (1989) 5-item in-role job performance scale was applied while evaluating the participants' perceived job performance levels (α=0.91). An example item is: "I always complete the duties specified in my description." The Turkish version of the scale was acquired from Ünüvar (2006). The fit for the measurement-model [χ^2 (121, n=394), 246.87, p <.01, GFI=0.947, CFI =0.959, TLI=0.937, and RMSEA=0.06] was acceptable. The reliability for the overall scale was 0.90.

Control variables. Age, gender, company (university), and job tenure of the participants were involved as control variables considering the past scholars' suggestions for controlling demographic items (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Reb et al., 2015).

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables.

As seen in Table 1, the results of the correlations between variables recommend supportive conditions for the hypothesized relationships in the proposed model. That is, mindfulness had a statistically positive relationship with employees' job performance levels (r=.20, p < .01). Further, mindfulness was positively
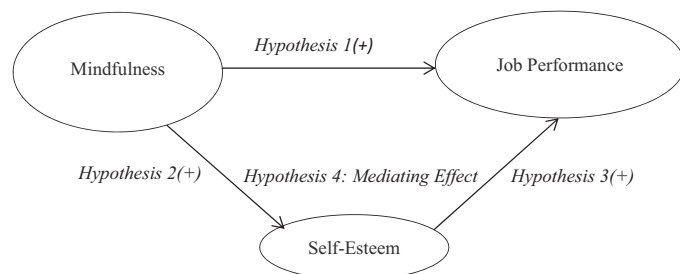
Table 1.
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Mindfulness	3.12	0.63	–	–
2. Self-esteem	3.19	0.82	.22**	–
3. Job performance	3.54	0.79	.20**	.36**

$N = 394$.
**$p < .01$.

Table 3.
Results of Mindfulness, Self-Esteem, and Job Performance Effects

Predictor Variable	Model 1: DV = JP	Model 2: DV = SE	Model 3: DV = JP
Direct effects			
Mindfulness	0.34**	0.49**	–
Self-esteem	–	–	0.39**
R^2	0.047	0.051	0.137
Adj. R^2	0.058	0.041	0.131
ANOVA F	11.17**	12.81**	37.27**

Note: DV = dependent variable; SE = self-esteem; JP = job performance.
**$p < .01$.

associated with self-esteem ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), and self-esteem was positively related with employees' job performance levels ($r = .36$, $p < .01$).

Confirmatory Factor Analyses
Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to measure the data fit to the projected measurement model. Table 2 indicates the results for the proposed measurement model. For the aim of confirming the distinctiveness of the variables, the suggested model (the model for three factors that involve scales of mindfulness, self-esteem, and job performance) was compared against the model involving two factors (including mindfulness and self-esteem), and the model containing one factor (in which all parameters of the three variables—mindfulness, self-esteem, and job performance—loaded onto a single factor). As evident from Table 2, the three-factor model showed a significantly better fit comparative to the two alternative models [χ^2 (417, n = 394), 915.46, $p < .01$, GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.92, and RMSEA = 0.05].

Additionally, for the purpose of addressing the issues for the common method variance, the test of Harman single-factor was applied (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For a single factor, findings indicated only 33.7% of variance. There was also no fit among the model involving a single factor and the data according to the CFA analysis results [x^2 (420, n = 394), 3154.37, $p < .01$, GFI = 0.51, CFI =0.52, TLI = 49, and RMSEA = 0.13)]. Therefore, it was determined that there was no common method bias.

Testing for the Hypotheses
For the aim of testing the direct impacts of the predicted relationships in the proposed model, bivariate analyses were executed by using linear regressions. Preacher and Hayes's (2004) approach was applied while testing the mediation effect within the model. Particularly, Sobel test as a parametric measurement and bootstrapping method as a nonparametric test were conducted to examine the mediation influence (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). When there is no zero value in the upper and lower confidence intervals, this means that there exists a significant variation within the coefficients aimed at testing the mediating influence (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Direct effects. For the purpose of testing the first three hypotheses, regression analyses were applied. Table 3 shows the results of these analyses.

Model 1: Mindfulness–job performance relationship. In Hypothesis 1, it was proposed that mindfulness would be positively associated with employees' job performance levels. As seen in Table 3, the regression analysis that assessed the association among mindfulness and job performance was significantly suitable (R^2 = 0.047, $F(654.37) = 11.17$, $p < .01$). The outcomes display that high mindfulness was related positively to employees' job performance levels ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Model 2: Mindfulness–self-esteem relationship. In Hypothesis 2, it was proposed that mindfulness had a positive relationship with employees' self-esteem. As shown in Table 3, the regression analysis assessing mindfulness–self-esteem relationship was significantly acceptable ($R^2 = 0.051$, $F(2,208,91) = 12.81$, $p < .01$). The results reveal that mindfulness was related positively to self-esteem ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < .01$). Hence, Hypothesis 2 was confirmed.

Model 3: Self-esteem–job performance relationship. In Hypothesis 3, it was proposed that self-esteem would be related positively to employees' job performance levels. As seen in Table 3, the regression analysis examining employees' self-esteem–job performance relationship was significantly adequate ($R^2 = 0.137$, $F(2.116,17) = 37.27$, $p < .01$). The findings indicate that self-esteem was related positively to employees' job performance levels ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < .01$). Consequently, Hypothesis 3 was confirmed.

Mediating effects
For the mediation effect, Table 4 displays Sobel test and bootstrapping method results based on 5000 samples.

In Hypothesis 4, it was proposed that employees' self-esteem would mediate the mindfulness–job performance relationship.

Table 2.
The Results for the Comparison of the Confirmatory Factor Analyses

	x^2	df	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Three-factor model (MI, SE, and JP)	915.46	417	0.93	0.95	0.92	0.05
Two-factor model (MI and SE)	1372.21	419	0.87	0.88	0.86	0.08
One-factor model (all in one construct)	3154.37	420	0.51	0.52	0.49	0.13

Note: MI = mindfulness; SE = self-esteem; JP = job performance.

Table 4.
Mediation Analyses Results

DV: Job performance			
	Sobel's Normal Theory Tests	95% Bias Corrected and Accelerated Confidence Intervals Bootstrapping Results	
Indirect effects	Z	Lower	Upper
Self-esteem	3.09	0.06	0.19

Note: DV = dependent variable.
$p < .01$.

While examining the mediation effect, according to Baron and Kenny's (1986) method, four conditions must be met. The first three conditions stating that (a) there should be a significant relationship between the independent (mindfulness) and dependent (job performance) variables; (b) a significant relationship should exist between the independent (mindfulness) and the mediating (self-esteem) variables; (c) there should be a significant relationship between the mediating (self-esteem) and the dependent (job performance) variables have been already confirmed. In the fourth condition, there will be a mediation influence if the effect of mindfulness on self-esteem is significant and there exists a mindfulness effect on job performance in the absenteeism of self-esteem. Self-esteem should have a significant impact on job performance and the influence of mindfulness on job performance shrinks upon the addition of self-esteem to the model (MacKinnon & Dwyer, 1993). Sobel test was conducted (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) with the aim of assessing the mediating impact of self-esteem on mindfulness–job performance linkage (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). As Table 4 shows, Sobel test results exposed that self-esteem significantly mediated the mindfulness–job performance relationship ($z = 3.09$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, bootstrapping analysis on a recommended 5000 samples was used to determine the range for the indirect impacts (MacKinnon et al., 2004). As evident from Table 4, bootstrapping analysis findings showed that the indirect impacts of self-esteem was ranging from 0.06 to 0.19. As there was no zero value within the bootstrapping analysis results, a full mediation was confirmed between the proposed relationship of mindfulness and job performance. In summary, both the Sobel test and bootstrapping analysis findings indicated statistically significant indirect impacts proposed in the model. Hence, Hypothesis 4 was confirmed.

Discussion

The importance of mindfulness in business life, which contributes greatly to social and emotional skills and is effective in the use of emotion regulation, awareness of emotions, and appropriate management skills, is increasing day by day. The purpose of this research was to shed light on the potential effects of mindfulness on employees' job performance levels.

The research findings authenticate a significant noteworthy function that mindfulness takes part in increasing employees' self-esteem. In line with the previous research, greater mindfulness levels make employees less lost in negative thoughts and feelings, further aiding in feeling higher self-esteem (Bajaj et al., 2016a). Through mindfulness, increased levels of awareness may encourage employees to give more notice to their current experiences and make them less likely to engage in negative thoughts and views, thus fostering self-esteem (Bajaj et al., 2016b). Mindfulness is not just a focus on the present moment. Mindfulness allows us to review not only pleasant experiences but also unpleasant ones. It helps us to deal with stress more easily in our lives, to be more objective toward events, and most importantly, to analyze our environment in an accepting and nonjudgmental way. Apart from its impacts on self-esteem, mindfulness also has a positive influence on constructive behavior, empathy, increased feelings of well-being, cognitive and affective flexibility, enhanced concentration, and attention, all of which are crucial factors in education.

In line with the recommendations from prior studies (Dane & Brummel, 2014; Reb et al., 2015), another addition of this research exists in the potential influence of mindfulness on job performance. Consistent with the learned helplessness (Peterson & Seligman, 1984) and self-consistency (Korman, 1970) theories, findings indicate that with high mindfulness employees achieve high job performance. Furthermore, consistent with the previous studies (Ferris et al., 2010), this research supports the direct effect of self-esteem on employees' job performance levels. Both empirically and theoretically, self-esteem has been suggested to have a positive correlation with employees' job performance in work settings (Judge & Bono, 2001). Employees, who have higher self-esteem, are more likely to be positive, active, and engage more in social activities compared to those with low self-esteem (Owens & McDavitt, 2006). Employees with high self-esteem levels believe they have value in the world and this belief may act as a connection among employees and their perceptions resulting in more positive work outcomes such as job performance (Whelpley & McDaniel, 2016).

The study findings supported the mediating influence of employees' self-esteem on the mindfulness–job performance relationship. The research findings validate a frame expressing that employees high in mindfulness tend to feel high self-esteem, which in turn enhances their job performance levels. With the help of this frame, this research makes a contribution to the positive orientation theory that focuses on individuals' positive views about themselves, their lives, and their future (Caprara et al., 2009). In line with this theory, employees will have a positive orientation (e.g., self-esteem via mindfulness), which in turn result in positive experiences (e.g., job performance) (Alessandri et al., 2015). With a different expression, by mindfulness effect, a positive orientation such as high self-esteem acts as the key source in achieving higher levels of job performance.

Consequently, the present study makes a contribution to the studies examining mindfulness as a remarkable predictor of job performance (King & Haar, 2017; Reb et al., 2015). By linking mindfulness to job performance through employees' self-esteem, we achieve a more complete understanding of job performance through a general assessment of one's value, with the substantial impact of mindfulness. Academicians devote most of their time to their students and educational institutions. In education life, academicians need to feel they are valuable, have worth, and believe in the decisions they make. Mindfulness may cause academicians to experience these feelings. Such feelings would lead them to feel better and more motivated, thus they will engage in a positive mood, have good relationships with their students, and show better performance in their work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has also several practical implications for organizations and managers. As well as job performance, research has suggested that mindfulness can potentially enhance well-being-related outcomes like job satisfaction levels (Andrews et al., 2014) and reduce mental health issues like stress (Bao et al., 2015), anxiety, and depression (Bajaj et al., 2016b). Mindfulness practices need some level of mental struggle because attention control (Baer, 2003) and attention switching (Bishop et al., 2004) are important in being mindful (Zivnuska et al., 2016). Such practices are trainable (Giluk, 2009) and mindfulness-based interventions enhance the mode of mindful awareness (Li et al., 2016). Therefore, mindfulness training programs should be organized by the organizations due to the relationship of mindfulness

with well-being-related outcomes in both life and work domains. Mindfulness-based training and interventions can help employees gain new ways to experience tolerance and awareness in their life. Mindfulness training may aid employees to become more present and connect more closely with themselves, rather than responding with contemplative or defensiveness (Christopher et al., 2006). Obtaining beneficial and valuable outcomes with the implementation of such training is also compatible with the positive orientation theory.

For the practical implications, managers should also have open communication with their employees and respect for their subordinates' opinions (King & Haar, 2017). Such administrative practices will help rise job proficiency levels and may result in increased self-esteem. After the utilization of such administrative policies, employees feeling higher self-esteem may show higher job performance. Such policies are also coherent with the self-consistency theory, which provides a theoretical framework for the self-esteem–work performance relationship.

Findings suggest that mindfulness can directly influence self-esteem, which in turn enhances employees' job performance levels. Programs, which aim to increase employees' mindfulness levels and their self-esteem can also reduce their stress and anxiety. Hence, intervention programs that address stress and anxiety may help employees understand their own values with the support of mindfulness (Bajaj et al., 2016a).

Finally, this research is the primary effort examining self-esteem as a mediating variable, which underlines the mechanism of the mindfulness–job performance relationship. Collecting data from a country such as Turkey, which is a combination of Western and Eastern cultures, with a Turkish sample of academicians provides important proof for the external validity of mindfulness as the forecaster of employees' self-esteem and job performance levels. Thus, the results can offer valuable recommendations for the purpose of organizing effective psychological interventions, which may have a favorable influence on employees' job performance through the beneficial effects of mindfulness and self-esteem.

There also exist some limitations in this research. Initially, the design of this research is cross-sectional and it can be hard to have causal relationships between the variables in a study with such a design. Longitudinal design involving causal relationships can be used in future studies. Second, self-report scales were utilized for the data collection. Multiple evaluation approaches can be conducted in future research with the aim of enhancing the validity of the results. Third, upcoming studies can investigate other possible underpinning means (e.g., optimism, self-efficacy, or emotional stability) by which mindfulness enhances employees' job performance levels.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Amaç

Bu çalışmanın amacı, çalışanların farkındalıkları ve iş performansları arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyerek, benlik saygısının söz konusu ilişki üzerindeki aracılık rolünü araştırmaktır. Kavramsal model, çalışanların yüksek düzeydeki farkındalıklarının, benlik saygılarını arttırarak iş performans seviyelerini güçlendirdiğini göstermektedir.

Yöntemler

Araştırmada kolayda örnekleme metodundan yararlanılmıştır. Bu yöntemin kullanılmasının nedeni erişimi kolay olan katılımcılara ulaşabilmeye imkan sağlaması ve nicel araştırmalarda çoklukla kullanılan bir yöntem olmasıdır. Araştırma örneklemini Türkiye'deki dört üniversitede görev yapan 394 akademisyen oluşturmaktadır. Bilinçli farkındalığın eğitim üzerindeki olumlu etkisinden dolayı araştırmada katılımcı olarak akademisyenler seçilmiştir. Akademisyenlerde bilinçli farkındalığın değerlendirilmesi, akademisyenlerin öğrenciler üzerindeki etkileri ve bilgi aktarımındaki rolleri açısından önemlidir. Katılımcılara verilen anket formları içinde iki bölüm bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan birinci bölümde demografik sorular mevcuttur. İkinci bölümde ise araştırma modelinde kullanılan farkındalık, benlik saygısı ve iş performansı ölçek soruları yer almaktadır. Araştırmada model uyum indekslerini değerlendirmek için doğrulayıcı faktör analizi (DFA) yapılmıştır. Araştırma hipotezlerinde sunulan ilişkilerin doğrudan etkilerini ölçmek için regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Önerilen modeldeki dolaylı etkileri ölçebilmek için Sobel testi ve bootstrapping yöntemi uygulanmıştır.

Bulgu ve Sonuçlar

Araştırma bulguları farkındalığın benlik saygısını artırmada önemli bir rolü olduğunu göstermektedir. Daha yüksek farkındalık seviyesi, çalışanın olumsuz düşünceler ve duygularla daha az meşgul olmasını sağlamakta ve benlik saygısını arttırmaktadır. Artan farkındalık, çalışanları mevcut deneyimlere daha fazla dikkat etmeye teşvik edebilir ve onların olumsuz düşünce ve inançlarla meşgul olma olasılıklarını azaltabilir ve böylece benlik saygısını geliştirebilir. Bu çalışmanın diğer bir katkısı da, farkındalığın iş performansı üzerindeki olumlu etkisidir. Bulgular, yüksek farkındalık ile çalışanların yüksek iş performansı elde ettiğini göstermektedir. Bu araştırma, benlik saygısının çalışanın iş performans düzeyi üzerindeki doğrudan etkisini de destekler niteliktedir. Benlik saygısı daha yüksek olan çalışanların, daha düşük öz saygı düzeyine sahip olanlara göre iyimser, proaktif ve daha yüksek sosyal aktivitelere sahip olma olasılıkları daha yüksektir. Çalışmanın en önemli bulgularından biri ise çalışanların benlik saygılarının, farkındalıkları ve iş performans düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki üzerinde aracılık etkisi olduğunu ortaya çıkarmasıdır. Araştırma bulguları, yüksek farkındalığa sahip çalışanların yüksek öz benlik duyumsama olasılıklarının daha yüksek olduğunu ve bunun da iş performanslarını artırdığını gösteren bir çerçeve ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çerçeve ile mevcut çalışma, bireylerin kendilerine, yaşamlarına ve geleceğine ilişkin olumlu görüşlerine odaklanan ve kişilerin başarılarında pozitif, olumlu ve yapıcı düşüncelerin etkisi olduğunu ifade eden pozitif yönelim teorisine de katkıda bulunmaktadır. Diğer bir deyişle, farkındalığın etkisiyle, yüksek benlik saygısı gibi olumlu bir yönelim, daha yüksek iş performansı seviyelerine ulaşmada anahtar kaynak görevi görmektedir. Araştırma bulguları, bir takım sınırlamaların ışığında değerlendirilmelidir. Bu çalışma, değişkenler arasında herhangi bir nedensel ilişki kurmayı zorlaştıran kesitsel bir tasarıma sahiptir. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, araştırma değişkenleri arasındaki nedensel ilişkileri içeren bir tasarım kullanarak bu sorunu ortadan kaldırabilir. Bunun yanı sıra, bu çalışmada veri toplarken öz bildirim (self-report) yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Gelecekteki çalışmalar, araştırma bulgularının geçerliliğini daha da güçlendirmek için birden fazla değerlendirme yöntemine sahip olabilir. Son olarak ise, gelecekteki araştırmalar, farkındalığın çalışanların iş performans seviyelerini artırdığı diğer olası altta yatan mekanizmaları (örneğin iyimserlik, öz yeterlik veya duygusal istikrar) üzerinde yoğunlaşabilir. Bu sınırlamaların dışında, mevcut çalışma, farkındalık ve iş performansı arasındaki ilişkide aracı değişken olarak benlik saygısını incelemeye yönelik olarak benzer çalışmaların olmaması nedeniyle literatüre önemli bir katkı sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca araştırmaya katılımcı olarak akademisyenlerin dahil edilmesi, akademisyenlerin öğrenci yetiştirmelerindeki rolleri ve bilgi transferinde çok önemli bir etkide bulunmaları sebebiyle büyük önem teşkil etmektedir.